



Connecticut Critical Incident Stress Management Team

You've just completed a critical incident stress debriefing/defusing where members of our CISD team and some of your co-workers honestly and openly shared their thoughts and reactions.

You heard some people talk about the physical, cognitive, or emotional problems they suffered either at the scene or afterward.

Our team then explained how the critical incident stress syndrome affects emergency service workers. We hope that you now realize that the experiences described are common symptoms following an event such as this-completely normal reactions suffered by normal people during and abnormal situation. It's also normal to relive the event and cast blame on yourself, or doubt your ability to respond to another serious call and perform properly.

Please understand that most CIS symptoms will subside and then disappear within a few days or weeks. You've already helped to speed the process by attending the session we conducted. You can now better understand and accept what you and your co-workers are going through without fearing that the problems suffered will be long lasting.

Even if you haven't been affected personally, you still benefited by attending the session because you learned that CIS is real, that it has bothered some people, and that it may affect you in the future. You are also now better prepared to assist your co-workers.

If you continue to be bothered by CIS symptoms, what can you do?

First, continue talking about your thoughts and reactions to those people in your service with whom you feel comfortable. Talking is the best way to understand your stress and deal with it. Second, exercise moderately and regularly. For most of us, working up a good sweat can alleviate stress, But, know your limitations and don't overdue it; listen to your body. Third, return to a normal routine as quickly as possible: Eat, rest and relax. Life will go on and so will you. Remember, your CIS symptoms will gradually subside.

Explain your feelings to your loved ones, but don't expect them to understand fully what you are going through; almost no one can unless they've had a similar experience.

Finally, if these suggestions don't help, and you feel that you'd like to talk in confidence to any CISD team member again, please call. If we can't help you, we'll recommend others who can. Our most important goal in CISD is to get you back into service as quickly as possible. Why? Because you are needed. You have the training, the talents, and the calling to help others. It's a gift your community can't afford to lose.

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